

Free Syrian Army, I'll just say a few words about that that I've gathered as I have circumnavigated this globe and sat down in a whole series of meetings that took place that put the pieces of the puzzle together on the intel with Syria and Egypt and others.

Just on the Syria side, we had a Free Syrian Army that emerged. It emerged as a popular uprising against Assad for his cruel and evil dictatorship of his people and for killing some of his own people even then, his political enemies. And the Free Syrian Army emerged. So they should have easily been the people that we supported.

Well, as that battle went on, they were taking over different areas within Syria, tactical objectives and communities and cities and large geographical areas of Syria. And at a certain point, the Muslim Brotherhood stepped in. They took over some parts of the Free Syrian Army. They set up an operation to essentially sacrifice the leader of the Free Syrian Army. He was captured in an operation where he was sacrificed. They took him out of command. His successor commander now has been marginalized and pushed off to the side.

And the Free Syrian Army—the knowledge that I have—is now controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood and other radical Islamist entities, including al Qaeda. That is the entity that we now have good enough intel that we are starting to send supplies and military supplies into.

Those two entities, Assad and radical Islamist components, which is a large component of the Free Syrian Army, they're the bad guys. They're both our enemies. Yet the administration is in the business now, a year after that should have been happening in an aggressive way, of arming some of the wrong people.

It's not that we didn't have good choices. There still are good choices. There still are good people in Syria and outside Syria that will step forward that want to have a secular Syria, a Syria that has freedom of religion, a Syria that is run by the people of Syria. Those elements are still there in Syria and around Syria—at least 2 million Syrian refugees. That force can be put together. It takes longer than firing a cruise missile into Damascus and picking a target to send a pinprick message. It can be done, but I'm not confident that this administration has identified our friends.

What I have seen is that, when we've aligned with anybody in the Middle East, it's been the Muslim Brotherhood. We've had 2½ years of the Arab Spring; and in every break that has changed the power within the countries of North Africa and the Middle East, every break has gone in favor of the Muslim Brotherhood, except one. That is now, when the Muslim Brotherhood took over Egypt under Morsi. Thirty to 33 million people came to the streets in a popular demonstration—the largest demonstration in the history of the

world—to unseat Morsi because they don't have a constitutional way to impeach him. They didn't have a way to arrest him. The only thing they could do was go to the streets and demand that he be removed from power.

Our administration sent a message before Morsi came to power that Mubarak had to be gone yesterday—remember that word? “He needs to be gone yesterday.” Well, that upset the balance of power in Egypt. That helped Morsi come to power. Morsi squeaked by by winning an election with 5.8 million people voting for him out of 83 million or so Egyptians altogether. Not exactly what you would call a majority of the people supporting Morsi—Morsi's complete incompetence, but also his very bold moves to consolidate power within Egypt to where it became clear that there was not going to be another election in Egypt and that the Muslim Brotherhood was going to impose shari'a law. And you start seeing that happen.

Well, 30 to 33 million people in the streets of Egypt, and the Egyptian military stepped forward to support the popular uprising that took place. Now they have laid out a time line, a roadmap to write a constitution, put a constitution out on a public vote to ratify and then to elect a president and a civilian government. And General Assisi has pledged to turn over this military control of the Egyptian Government to a newly elected, legitimate civilian government. That time line is a good time line. It's a good commitment that has been set up and it's a good result.

The problem we have is that our administration was against Mubarak and helped push him out of power. That helped open the door for Morsi, who came in—one of the Muslim Brotherhood. And it's clear, this new leadership, the interim President of Egypt, General Assisi, commanding the military—and also, by the way, they have the support of the Pope of the Coptic Christian Church in Egypt—all of that, the new forces are clear. They oppose the Muslim Brotherhood.

The struggle within the Middle East, Muslim Brotherhood, radical Islam, radical and violent Islamist groups working against the free people in that part of the world, we need to be on the right side of everyone, not on the wrong side of everyone. And the administration is going to have to turn their course around in Egypt and get behind the new administration and support new elections and a new constitution.

I yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr. PERRY. I would like to pose a question to you based on what you've seen regarding Syria and Benghazi and Libya, the classified briefings and your travels.

This administration reported to us that Syria had used chemical weapons 11 times previously. On the 12th time, we want to send a message that that's not okay—and it's not okay, let's be

clear about that. But why didn't we send a message and why haven't we sent a message that it's not okay to kill a United States Ambassador? When is that message going to be sent?

I would just like to get your thoughts on that and the dichotomy and the lack of parallel in some kind of strategy and foreign policy that is congruent and makes sense to our allies and our adversaries.

Mr. KING of Iowa. Well, I would just say to the gentleman that he has pointed out a stark contradiction in our policy. Eleven or 12 times of alleged, at least, weapons of mass destruction used against the Syrian people. I'm going to suggest that this push now is because some of the people that want those elements of the Free Syrian Army that I described to succeed are saying, Help us out by landing a strike or two in on Assad. That's my guess.

But with regard to justice for the people that perpetrated the Benghazi incident against our Americans and our American Ambassador, that justice needs to be delivered. We know who some of those people are. And it's irresponsible of this administration to shut information down to the United States Congress, to the American people, and to fail to act when they have a clear act of war committed against the United States on U.S. territory.

□12:45

I'm aware that the clock has ticked down here to the end.

I want to thank the gentleman from Pennsylvania for coming to the floor. I'm sure that he wasn't aware that this wasn't choreographed. It was a spontaneous eruption of protest calling for the truth to come out and a light to shine on Benghazi.

I thank the gentleman from Virginia for his leadership on this, Mr. Speaker, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SALMON). The Chair would remind Members to direct their remarks to the Chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Pate, one of his secretaries.

PRINCIPLES FOR MODERNIZING THE MILITARY COMPENSATION AND RETIREMENT SYSTEMS—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 113-60)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Armed Services and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

Pursuant to section 674(c) of the National Defense Authorization Act for

Fiscal Year 2013, Public Law 112-239, January 2, 2013, I hereby transmit principles for modernizing the military compensation and retirement systems requested by the Act.

BARACK OBAMA.

THE WHITE HOUSE, September 12, 2013.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

THE SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) for 30 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, as the House adjourns, I want to note that when we come back the House will be in session for 5 days before the end of the fiscal year. That could bring a shutdown of the Federal Government. What most Americans don't know is that that could bring a shutdown also of the government of the Nation's Capital, the District of Columbia.

I want to make clear that there is not a single Member of this House or the Senate who desires that outcome. There is nothing in that for anybody. Many Members of Congress and their staff actually live in the District of Columbia, so to have the Nation's Capital shut down is not anything that would be even in their interest.

Beyond their own interest, most Members of Congress believe in local control and are mystified when they come here, whatever their party, to find that the Congress has anything to do with the local budget of the District of Columbia—\$8 billion raised by the city—which has to come here before the city can spend a dime of its own money.

The city has before the Congress, as I speak, a balanced budget. In fact, a budget that has won plaudits all around the country, and even in this Congress, because of the fund balance that the city has managed to build—over \$1 billion—over time. D.C.'s very middle name should be "prudence." If anything, the District of Columbia has been an example of what we are trying to get cities and States all across the country to do.

I understand why the leadership decided not to move forward with a continuing resolution, which would have guaranteed that the government would remain open until December 15. They need the time to get the votes and to satisfy their Members. That's perfectly understandable. What would not be understandable is if we went through another shutdown crisis.

The government actually did shut down about 18 years ago. I do want to say here on the floor how grateful I am to the Speaker of the House at the time, Newt Gingrich, who indeed kept the District of Columbia, the Nation's Capital, open during multiple shutdowns of the Federal Government. He did so simply because it makes no sense to shut down the government of the Nation's Capital, which has not one ounce of interest in or blame for the

disputes that have increasingly grown and have caused us to go on continuing resolutions because we do not get our bills done in time. There needs to be time to reconcile those matters.

It is important to note that the District of Columbia budget, which was submitted here on time, is in such good shape that it did, in fact, pass both of the appropriation committees that receive it. So there's no issue here involving the District of Columbia, no reason why anybody would want it entangled in a Federal dispute. In fact, I thought that my good friends in the majority, above all, stood for disentanglement of the Federal Government from what should rightly be the work of the localities.

I hasten to say this is an unintended consequence that comes from the fact that most Members don't even know it. Members come here to do the business of their district and the Federal Government. They don't come here to be educated on the District of Columbia. They have no idea that the District would close down if there was a close-down of the Federal Government. They would understand that I must do my job, and that is to take whatever steps I can to make sure that this unintended result does not occur.

I'm asking to testify at the Rules Committee when the continuing resolution is considered. That is the resolution, as I indicated, that would keep the government open until December 15. It is interesting to know that with only a slight change the District of Columbia would not be an issue here.

I want to thank the Republican appropriators who—it must be at least 10 years ago—corrected another consequence that the Congress never intended. The District budget used to be held up whenever the budget, of course, of the Federal Government was held up, and for the very same reason that it hadn't come to the floor.

So you had a city whose budget was due out by September 30 which sometimes got out in November or December. This wreaked havoc on the opening of schools and on the ability of the city to contract because the budget was over here and hadn't been passed.

It is important also to put on the record that the budget doesn't come here because any Member of the Congress is interested in the budget or thinks that their oversight is necessary to make sure that the budget is done correctly. In fact, the budget is virtually never looked at.

What does happen when a budget comes here is that extraneous amendments that reflect the views, not of the District of Columbia, but of a Member who is offering them, often are attached to our budget.

The Appropriations Committee has never interfered with the budget itself. How could they? The budget has been put together by D.C. Council subcommittees and committees and the city has a chief financial officer—the only jurisdiction in the United States

that has a financial officer appointed for 5 years, cannot be fired except for cause, who has to pass on the budget and make sure that there is no overspending. The D.C. budget comes here out of tradition. It comes here because for more than 200 years it has come here while the Congress has been trying to figure out how to deal with the anomalous position that it has put its Nation's Capital in.

So here it is. In order to avoid the budget getting out so late that you cripple or certainly make extremely difficult the ability of the city officials to run a big, complicated city, the appropriators agreed upon a small change. I'm asking us to act on that already existing change.

That change says that in every CR there will be, no matter what the CR says, and most CRs say very little, that the District will be allowed to spend its own funds at the levels that have been approved by its council, and by the Mayor, at next year's level. That has had enormously important good effects on the city. I believe we will be in the upcoming CR in the same way.

As the District's Member of Congress, I have to contemplate the possibility, however, that even on December 15 the government could close down. And I would have to, indeed, look at what would be even, perhaps, better, that it didn't close down but there was yet another CR. Imagine trying to run a big city in the United States on multiple CRs. That's what I'm trying to avoid. That's what no Member of Congress intends.

I also have had to take precautions for the possibility that even the CR that comes before us—I'm hoping next week—could fail. If that CR fails, I also have a bill that would allow the District to run whenever the Federal Government shuts down, this year and in perpetuity. Again, if I am right that there is no Member who would like to shut down any local jurisdiction, and especially the Nation's Capital, then I think this bill would take care of it.

I have to go now to the Rules Committee for the CR, the next step. That's the next opportunity to draw this matter to the attention of the House and to, therefore, by amendment allow the District to spend for the entire fiscal year, not from CR to CR, but for the entire fiscal year.

I don't think that is asking too much, and I've never had an objection when I've tried to keep the District open. It has been difficult to do. Three times the District almost shut down in recent history because we got that close to it.

The problem for the city when the city almost closes down runs close to being like if it does close down. The city can't assume the best; it has to assume the worst, so it has to call out its staff and its lead officials to prepare for a shutdown even if a shutdown does not occur.

The only responsible thing for the city to do right now with only 5 session